Antifa Cell Members Convicted in Prairieland ICE Detention Center Shooting

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For Immediate Release

Office of Public Affairs

Nine North Texas Antifa Cell operatives were convicted today by a federal jury in Fort Worth, Texas for their roles in rioting, using weapons and explosives, providing material support to terrorists, obstruction, and attempted murder of an Alvarado police officer at the Prairieland ICE Detention Center on July 4, 2025.

In a 12-day trial that began on Feb. 23, jurors heard testimony from more than 45 witnesses and considered over 210 exhibits supporting the charges against nine indicted defendants: Cameron Arnold, also known as Autunm Hill; Zachary Evetts; Benjamin Song; Savanna Batten; Bradford Morris, also known as Meagan Morris; Maricela Rueda; Elizabeth Soto; Ines Soto; and Daniel Rolando Sanchez-Estrada. Seven others, Seth Sikes, Nathan Baumann, Joy Gibson, Susan Kent, Rebecca Morgan, Lynette Sharp, and John Thomas, pleaded guilty last year to one count of providing material support to terrorists.

“Antifa is a domestic terrorist organization that has been allowed to flourish in Democrat-led cities — not under President Trump,” said Attorney General Pamela Bondi. “Today’s verdict on terrorism charges will not be the last as the Trump administration systematically dismantles Antifa and finally halts their violence on America’s streets.”

“These guilty verdicts and convictions rightly reflect the vicious, armed attack that these Antifa cell members planned and executed against law enforcement and detention center officers on the night of July 4 last year,” said U.S. Attorney Ryan Raybould for the Northern District of Texas. “Their terrorist acts, attempted murder, vandalism, and explosives launched at a detention facility were a far cry from some peaceful protest or First Amendment expression. Because of the prompt action of first responders that night and tenacious work of our law enforcement partners in tandem with the prosecutors in my office, sixteen people have been brought to justice for these violent acts and their attempts to conceal them. We will continue in this mission to hold others accountable who perpetrate such violence and fund these ANTIFA groups in the Northern District of Texas.”

“Today’s verdict shows the FBI remains committed to identifying, locating, and dismantling Antifa and its funding networks across the country,” said FBI Director Kash Patel. “Acts of violence against our law enforcement partners will not be tolerated, and we continue our work to protect communities across the country from domestic terrorism.”

“The coordinated attack on the Prairieland Detention Center required a whole of government approach from the initial response throughout the investigation and trial. The FBI’s JTTF led this collective effort resulting in convictions and guilty pleas by those who committed violent

acts against our law enforcement partners," said Special Agent in Charge R. Joseph Rothrock of the FBI Dallas Field Office. "I want to thank all the law enforcement agencies that collaborated with us on this investigation. Our collective goal remains to ensure the safety and security of our communities in North Texas."

"This case marks a historic moment as it represents the nation's initial federal indictment targeting a coordinated group of Antifa cell members engaged in violent criminal activity," said HSI Dallas Special Agent in Charge Travis Pickard. "The charges demonstrate our unwavering commitment to confronting domestic terrorism and protecting our communities from organized threats."

Testimony and other evidence at trial established that the defendants were members of a North Texas Antifa Cell, part of a larger militant enterprise made up of networks of individuals and small groups primarily ascribing to an ideology that explicitly calls for the overthrow of the United States Government, law enforcement authorities, and the system of law. An expert testifying in the government's case told the jury that Antifa's coordinated efforts involve obstructing Federal law through organized riots, violent assaults, and armed confrontations with law enforcement officers, increasingly targeting agents and facilities related to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)'s Immigration and Customs Enforcement in opposition to the agency's deportation actions.

Evidence at trial revealed that most of the Antifa Cell involved in the Prairieland attack looked to Benjamin Song as a leader. Song acquired firearms that he distributed to co-defendants and recruited members at gun ranges and combat sessions he conducted, as well as from various ideologically aligned groups. For example, defendants Ines Soto, Elizabeth Soto, and Savanna Batten were part of a group that created and distributed insurrectionary materials called "zines," according to trial evidence.

Trial testimony reflected that, late at night on July 4, at least 11 of the defendants rioted and attacked the Prairieland Detention Center in Alvarado, Texas, which the DHS was using to house illegal aliens awaiting deportation. The defendants dressed in "black bloc" — dark clothing with head and face coverings that concealed their identities — designed to hide each individual's identity but also to aid and abet those members engaged in illegal acts by making members indistinguishable from one another to law enforcement. Evidence introduced at trial revealed that the defendants brought eleven firearms, body armor, and eleven military-grade first aid kits with tourniquets and other items for gunshot wounds to the scene of the attack. Many of these items were introduced by the government as exhibits. Additionally, fingerprint evidence linked many of the defendants to the items at the scene, and evidence obtained on phone locations supported that those who participated in the attack all turned off their phones or placed them in Faraday bags to prevent tracking on the night of the attack.

After Antifa Cell members arrived at Prairieland, they began shooting off and throwing fireworks (explosives) at the facility and vandalizing vehicles and a guard shack on Prairieland property:

Image from surveillance camera, presented at trial in United States v. Arnold et al., case number 25-cr-259 in the Northern District of Texas.

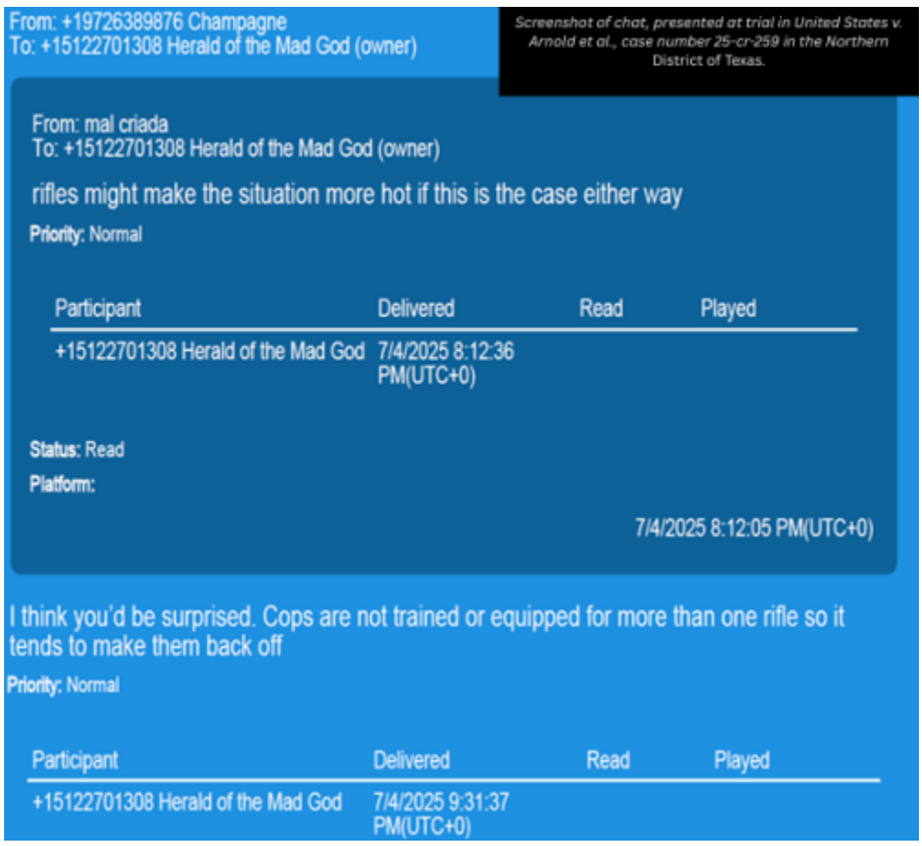
Image from surveillance camera, presented at trial in United States v. Arnold et al., case number 25-cr-259 in the Northern District of Texas.

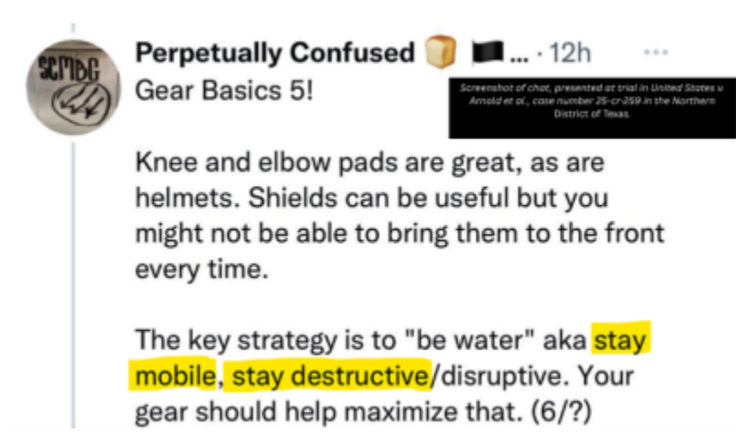
Witnesses testified that an Alvarado police officer responded to the scene after correctional officers called 911. When the officer began issuing commands to defendant Nathan Baumann, Benjamin Song can be heard on police bodycam video yelling, “get to the rifles!” and then he opened fire on the officers, striking the Alvarado police officer in the neck as the unarmed correctional officers ducked and ran for cover. Police arrested most of the Antifa Cell shortly after the attack, many near the scene. Benjamin Song escaped and remained at large with the help of others until his capture on July 15, 2025.

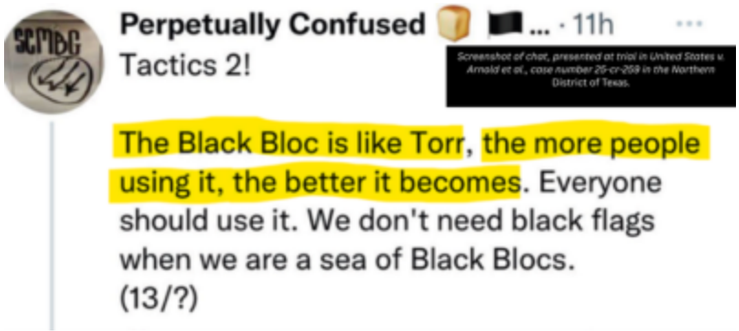
Trial evidence demonstrated that collectively, the Antifa Cell acquired over 50 firearms in the Fort Worth/Dallas area prior to July 4. During trial, the government introduced numerous chats of the members, who used an encrypted messaging app to coordinate with each other that had auto-delete functions, permanently deleting some Antifa Cell members’ communications. They also used monikers in group chats to hide their identities, and some of the planning chats included only trusted participants. The chats introduced at trial revealed that members in this limited group conducted reconnaissance and discussed what to bring to the riot, including firearms, medical kits, and fireworks:

282	**Timestamp:** 7/3/2025 2:47:58 PM(UTC+0)	**Subject:** Rel to Funday Crew 1 **Body:** There's a cop that's been involved in like every major shooting/disaster in recent history
283	**Timestamp:** 7/3/2025 2:48:37 PM(UTC+0)	**Subject:** Jon ValJon (he/him) to Funday Crew 1 **Body:** Let's say we had good intel on a date/time/target combo. What would we do about it? Block roads, slash tires, something else?
284	**Timestamp:** 7/3/2025 2:49:40 PM(UTC+0)	**Subject:** Champagne to Funday Crew 1 **Body:** Try to confront and turn out a lot of people. My thinking is we can go out and do whatever at any time. But picking a good confrontation is about building momentum

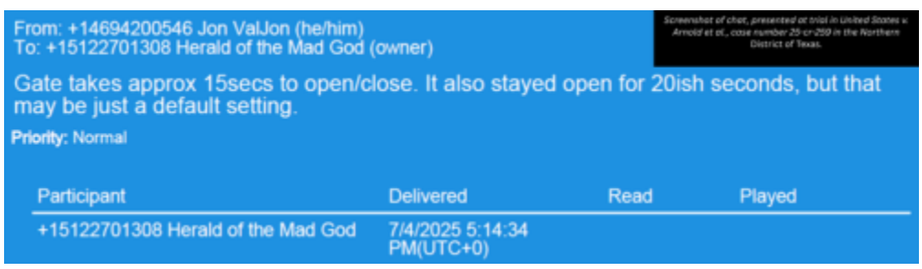
Screenshot of chat, presented at trial in United States v. Arnold et al., case number 25-cr-259 in the Northern District of Texas.


From: +19726389876 Champagne
To: +15122701308 Herald of the Mad God (owner)
Screenshot of chat, presented at trial in United States v. Arnold et al., case number 25-cr-259 in the Northern District of Texas.
From: mal criada
To: +15122701308 Herald of the Mad God (owner)
rifles might make the situation more hot if this is the case either way
Priority: Normal
Participant
Delivered
Read
Played
+15122701308 Herald of the Mad God
7/4/2025 8:12:36 PM(UTC+0)
Status: Read
Platform:
7/4/2025 8:12:05 PM(UTC+0)
I think you'd be surprised. Cops are not trained or equipped for more than one rifle so it tends to make them back off
Priority: Normal
Participant
Delivered
Read
Played
+15122701308 Herald of the Mad God
7/4/2025 9:31:37 PM(UTC+0)


Perpetually Confused ... · 12h
Gear Basics 5!
Screenshot of chat, presented at trial in United States v. Arnold et al., case number 25-cr-259 in the Northern District of Texas.
Knee and elbow pads are great, as are helmets. Shields can be useful but you might not be able to bring them to the front every time.
The key strategy is to "be water" aka stay mobile, stay destructive/disruptive. Your gear should help maximize that. (6/?)


Perpetually Confused ... · 11h
Tactics 2!
Screenshot of chat, presented at trial in United States v. Arnold et al., case number 25-cr-259 in the Northern District of Texas.
The Black Bloc is like Torr, the more people using it, the better it becomes. Everyone should use it. We don't need black flags when we are a sea of Black Blocs. (13/?)

Witnesses who testified during the government's case included the Alvarado police officer who was shot in the neck by Song, detention officers present that night who also took cover from rapid fire, multiple additional responding officers, numerous investigative agents, and cooperating codefendants, including Baumann, Sharp, Thomas, and Kent. Among other things, Kent testified that the night before the attack at a "gear check," Song proposed to free the detainees at Prairieland and told the group that they should wear black bloc and bring rifles, because he (Song) wasn't going to be arrested. Evidence at trial also revealed that some of the defendants attended a peaceful daytime protest at Prairieland on July 4 — without the gear they brought that night — and that they reported back to other defendants details regarding security at the facility:


From: +14694200546 Jon ValJon (he/him)
To: +15122701308 Herald of the Mad God (owner)
Screenshot of chat, presented at trial in United States v. Arnold et al., case number 25-cr-259 in the Northern District of Texas.
Gate takes approx 15secs to open/close. It also stayed open for 20ish seconds, but that may be just a default setting.
Priority: Normal
Participant
Delivered
Read
Played
+15122701308 Herald of the Mad God
7/4/2025 5:14:34 PM(UTC+0)

The jury convicted the nine defendants of the following offenses:

- **Riot**, with the intent to commit an act of violence, involving conduct such as shooting and throwing fireworks and explosives, slashing tires on a government vehicle, spraying graffiti on property and vehicles, destroying a closed circuit camera, shooting at officers, and dressing in black bloc.
  - Defendants convicted: Cameron Arnold, Zachary Evetts, Benjamin Song, Savanna Batten, Bradford Morris, Maricela Rueda, Elizabeth Soto, Ines Soto
- **Providing Material Support to Terrorists**, including property, services, training, communications equipment, weapons, explosives, personnel (including themselves), and transportation.
  - Defendants convicted: Arnold, Evetts, Song, Batten, Morris, Rueda, E. Soto, and I. Soto
- **Conspiracy to Use and Carry an Explosive**, and **Using and Carrying an Explosive**, during a riot.
  - Defendants convicted: Arnold, Evetts, Song, Batten, Morris, Rueda, E. Soto, and I. Soto
- **Attempted Murder of Officers and Employees of the United States**, involving the unlawful attempt to kill with malice aforethought Correctional Officers-1 and 2, and an Alvarado Police Officer.
  - Defendants convicted: Song
- **Discharging a Firearm During, and in Relation to, and in Furtherance of a Crime of Violence**, i.e., the attempted murder of two correctional officers and an Alvarado Police Officer.
  - Defendants convicted: Song

- **Corruptly Concealing a Document or Record**, by transporting a box containing numerous Antifa materials, such as insurrection planning, anti-law enforcement, anti-government, and anti-immigration enforcement documents and propaganda from Sanchez Estrada's residence to a location in Denton, Texas, intending to conceal the box's contents and impair its availability for use in a federal grand jury and federal criminal proceeding.
  - Defendant convicted: Daniel Rolando Sanchez Estrada
- **Conspiracy to Conceal Documents** and other objects that would implicate Maricela Rueda in the riot and shooting at the Prairieland facility.
  - Defendants convicted: Sanchez Estrada and Maricela Rueda

Song faces a minimum penalty of 20 years in prison and a maximum penalty of life in prison. Arnold, Evetts, Morris, Rueda, Batten, Elizabeth Soto, and Ines Soto each face a minimum penalty of 10 years in prison and a maximum penalty of 60 years in prison. Sanchez Estrada faces a maximum penalty of 40 years in prison.

The sole count of providing material support to terrorists to which Baumann, Gibson, Kent, Morgan, Sharp, Thomas, and Sikes pleaded guilty mirrors the material support offense in the charges presented to the jury at trial. Each of these defendants faces a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison.

Sentencing hearings for the 16 defendants are pending in front of U.S. District Judge Mark Pittman for the Northern District of Texas who oversaw the trial.

The investigation was conducted by the FBI Dallas Field Office, HSI, ATF, the Texas Department of Public Safety, the Alvarado Police Department, and the Johnson County Sheriff's Office.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Frank Gatto, Shawn Smith, and Matt Capoccia for the Northern District of Texas prosecuted the case.

Updated March 16, 2026

Topics

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